

**Department of Health**  
**Governor's budget proposal: public health**  
**For 2011 - 2013**  
*November 29, 2011*



Governor Chris Gregoire has proposed a supplemental budget to cut \$2 billion to meet the challenge of dwindling revenues. The governor's budget includes about \$14.5 million in general fund cuts to Department of Health programs. It also provides additional funding for a few specific programs from sources other than the state general fund. Details of proposed cuts and added funding are listed below.

**Epidemiology, Health Statistics, and the Public Health Laboratories**

Data Collection and Analysis: reductions total \$295,000

Eliminate record collection and reporting activities under Washington's Death with Dignity Act and reduce the frequency of the Comprehensive Hospital Abstract Reporting System data file release from quarterly to annually. This would reduce capacity to provide customized, timely health data used to guide public health policy and operational decisions.

Public Health Laboratories: reductions total \$391,000

Eliminate several staff positions at the Public Health Laboratories in drinking water, radiation, and laboratory support. This would reduce overall capacity of the laboratory to perform testing and would slow down routine test results.

HIV/AIDS: reductions total \$3,914,000

For our HIV positive clients, reduces supplemental insurance coverage and co pays, leaving only support insurance to cover antiretroviral medications. This cut reduces coverage of other medications for clients without insurance. It may end community services and dental care for people with HIV, along with our support for specific HIV prevention strategies in rural counties. The reductions shift costs for insurance, prescriptions, and co-pays to clients and leave injection drug users in rural counties with little or no access to clean syringes.

**Environmental Health**

Drinking Water: reductions total \$362,000

Reduce staff that provides technical assistance to water systems. This may decrease our ability to help water systems that have contaminated drinking water and may increase the amount of time water systems are out of compliance with state regulations. Cut back funding for staff that provide real-time maps and information to identify drinking water supplies that are vulnerable to contamination and help them maintain safe supplies during emergencies.

Puget Sound and Water Protection: reductions total \$307,000

Reduce staffing and drop participation in the Puget Sound Assessment and Monitoring Program. This may delay re-opening of closed or threatened shellfish beds. Reduce staff that work on large on-site sewage systems (OSS) permitting, compliance, technical support, and reduce pass-through funding to local health agencies for small OSS work. These cuts would decrease our ability to monitor systems' conditions and respond to problems.

Water Recreation Program /Local Health Support: reductions total \$65,000

Reduce staffing to provide technical support to local health and business partners on the safe design and operation of water recreation facilities. Stop work on essential rules, technical standards, and guidance needed to stay current with innovations and federal requirements. This reduction may affect waterborne illnesses, serious injuries, and drowning at the 6,000 water recreation pools, spas, and water parks in our state.

Wastewater Support: reductions total \$140,000

Reduce wastewater program staff, lowering our capacity to develop and update guidance and standards for large onsite sewage systems and other wastewater treatment technologies. This will increase the time it takes for engineering review and approval for wastewater projects and may delay the installation of wastewater projects.

Zoonotic Disease Surveillance: reductions total \$64,000

Eliminate our wildlife plague monitoring, which alerts health officials if action to control and prevent human exposure is needed. Plague is common in wildlife in our state. This cut would end our animal import monitoring, which helps prevent rabies from entering our animal population. Cutting surveillance/monitoring affects our ability to prevent exposures, illnesses, and deaths.

### **Health Systems Quality Assurance**

Senior Falls: reductions total \$158,000

Reduce our Senior Falls prevention program that works with local communities and coalitions to prevent senior falls. This would cut the number of Senior Falls Coalition meetings we support; we would no longer identify best practices or help local communities in implementing programs.

Youth Suicide Prevention: reductions total \$ 266,000

End our Youth Suicide Prevention program, and stop providing support to youth suicide prevention activities. This includes eliminating funding for the statewide not-for-profit Youth Suicide Prevention Program that does prevention education and training for youth.

Emergency Medical Systems (EMS) & Trauma: reductions total \$ 443,000

Reduce funding to the eight regional EMS and Trauma Councils. The councils are responsible for EMS training and education; injury prevention; identifying local/regional need for aid, ambulance service, and hospital resources; and implementing the new emergency cardiac and stroke system. The regions would have to find ways to consolidate resources; it may be necessary to eliminate some activities required by statute.

Area Health Education Centers (AHEC)/Rural Health Capacity: reductions total \$ 296,000

Reduce funds to AHECs and eliminate our funding to pay the insurance for volunteer retired providers. AHECs work to get people interested in healthcare careers in rural and underserved areas. This cut would decrease the number of students providing care in rural and underserved communities and the number of students who go into practice in those areas when they graduate. It could also reduce the number of retired providers such as physicians and dentists who would be willing to volunteer to serve in low-income clinics.

Training, background checks for long term care workers: added funding, total \$4.4 million

Funding from the Health Professions Account would be used to cover the costs of mandatory training, background checks, and certification of long-term care workers as required by Initiative 1163, approved by Washington voters in the November 2011 election.

Replace state general funds with fees for emergency medical services: \$1.7 million (biennium)

Licensing and regulating more than 17,000 emergency service personnel and 480 agencies is now subsidized by state general fund money. This proposal would cut the general fund dollars and replace them with fees to cover the costs of licensing and regulation.

### **Prevention & Community Health**

Maternal and Child Health: reductions total \$2,653,000

Eliminate state funds for oral health initiatives in local health agencies, care coordination for maxillofacial birth defects and craniofacial anomalies, medical resident training in miscarriage management, and infrastructure for neurodevelopmental centers that serve children with special health care needs. This cut would decrease funds for the family health hotline, genetics clinics, and training for early hearing loss detection, diagnosis, and intervention.

WIC Farmers Market: reductions total \$200,000

Eliminate state funds for WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program to buy fruits and vegetables at farmer's markets.

Family Planning: reductions total \$1,800,000

Make a 10 percent cut in state funds that support family planning services, reducing funding to local agencies and other private/non-profit organizations that provide family planning services.

Tobacco Quitline: added funding, total \$1.7 million

Despite declining rates in Washington in the past decade, tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the state. About 750,000 adults and 70,000 kids still smoke. This proposal allows the Department of Health to use the remaining funds from the Tobacco Prevention and Control Account to continue Quitline service for uninsured and underinsured residents of Washington.

### **Central Administration: reductions total \$505,000**

The offices within Central Administration will hold vacancies, causing longer turnaround times in areas such as information technology support, human resources, and financial services.